

Instant Messaging and Enhanced Scheduling

ABSTRACT

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Instant messaging communications method and apparatus are provided in which one of the parties is not a person but an automated system or agent (bot) that accepts requests and issues responses. The invention provides such a bot, which can be used as an aid to scheduling events and tasks, either alone, or in conjunction with
10 other individuals. The bot is addressable by the user. In one embodiment, a bot appears as an entity on a buddy list. For example, a participant who would like to schedule a meeting initiates a conversation with the bot, which then asks a series of questions to determine the intent of the user. The bot could also initiate instant messaging communications to prospective meeting attendees and mediate a
15 discussion related to the meeting. In another embodiment, the agent or bot is linked to an online calendar service to determine participant availability and after finalizing meeting details, adds such information to the participants' online calendar, as dictated by the capabilities of the calendar application.

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